

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

In the claims, please cancel all pending claims (1–22), without prejudice, in the present application and add the following new claims 23–50.

81 Claims 1–22 (canceled)

Claim 23 (new) An apparatus for evaluating the integrity of a seal on a liquid-filled container comprising:
a clamp having a first and second member for securing a container between the members;
a ram connected to the clamp to provide relative movement between the first and second members; and,
a liquid-filled tank situated with respect to the clamp such that at least a portion of a container secured between the first and second members may extend into the tank and a closure of the container be submerged in the liquid.

Claim 24 (new) The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the ram is actuated by one of the group consisting of air pressure, hydraulic pressure, electric motor, and combinations of these.

Claim 25 (new) The apparatus of claim 23 having a seat to support a container in a desired position to be secured by the clamp.

Claim 26 (new) The apparatus of claim 23 including a means for forming an aperture in a container while being secured in the clamp.

Claim 27 (new) The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the apparatus includes a support platform which is moveable along a floor surface on devices for reducing friction between the platform and the floor surface, the clamp and the tank being mounted on the platform.

Claim 28 (new) The apparatus of claim 25 including a means for forming an aperture in a container.

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Claim 29 (new) The apparatus of claim 25 wherein the apparatus includes a support platform which is moveable along a floor surface on devices for reducing friction between the platform and the floor surface, the clamp and the tank being mounted on the platform.

Claim 30 (new) The apparatus of claim 26 including a support for the means for forming an aperture, the support being configured to accommodate vertical and horizontal movement of the means for forming an aperture.

Claim 31 (new) The apparatus of claim 28 including a support for the means for forming an aperture, the support being configured to accommodate vertical and horizontal movement of the means for forming an aperture.

Claim 32 (new) The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the devices for reducing friction between the platform and the floor surface include a plurality of wheels.

Claim 33 (new) The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the devices for reducing friction between the platform and the floor surface include a plurality of wheels.

Claim 34 (new) The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the platform has at least one connector for removably connecting the apparatus to a source of electricity.

Claim 35 (new) The apparatus of claim 27 wherein the platform has at least one connector for removably connecting the apparatus to a source of pressurized air.

Claim 36 (new) The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the platform has at least one connector for removably connecting the apparatus to a source of electricity.

Claim 37 (new) The apparatus of claim 29 wherein the platform has at least one connector for removably connecting the apparatus to a source of pressurized air.

Claim 38 (new) The apparatus of claim 26 further comprising:
a conductivity evaluating instrument including a first and second electrode, the first electrode being integrated with the means for forming an aperture such that when the means for forming an aperture penetrates a wall of a container, the electrode is in contact with the liquid in the container without removing the means for forming an aperture from the container; and,
the second electrode of the instrument being immersed in the liquid in the tank.

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Claim 39 (new) The apparatus of claim 28 further comprising:

a conductivity evaluating instrument including a first and second electrode, the first electrode being integrated with the means for forming an aperture such that when the means for forming an aperture penetrates a wall of a container, the electrode is in contact with the liquid in the container without removing the means for forming an aperture from the container; and,
the second electrode of the instrument being immersed in the liquid in the tank.

Claim 40 (new) The apparatus of claim 26 further comprising:

a conductivity evaluating instrument including a first and second electrode, the first electrode being moveable and sized such that it can be inserted into an aperture formed in the container and extend into the liquid in the container; and,
the second electrode of the instrument being immersed in the liquid in the tank.

Claim 41 (new) The apparatus of claim 28 further comprising:

a conductivity evaluating instrument including a first and second electrode, the first electrode being moveable and sized such that it can be inserted into an aperture formed in the container and extend into the liquid in the container; and,
the second electrode of the instrument being immersed in the liquid in the tank.

Claim 42 (new) The apparatus of claim 38 wherein the means for forming an aperture in a container may include an element selected from the group consisting of a drill, a heated lance, a mechanical punch and an electrode.

Claim 43 (new) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein the means for forming an aperture in a container may be selected from the group consisting of a drill, a heated lance, a mechanical punch and an electrode.

Claim 44 (new) The apparatus of claim 40 wherein the means for forming an aperture in a container may include an element selected from the group consisting of a drill, a heated lance, a mechanical punch and an electrode.

Claim 45 (new) The apparatus of claim 41 wherein the means for forming an aperture in a container may be selected from the group consisting of a drill, a heated lance, a mechanical punch and an electrode.

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- Claim 46 (new) A method for evaluating the integrity of a seal on a liquid-filled container comprising:
- securing a liquid-filled container in a clamp such that a portion of that container extends into the liquid of a liquid-filled tank;
 - forming an aperture in the secured container;
 - providing a first electrode in the aperture formed in the container and providing a second electrode in the liquid-filled tank; and,
 - electrically comparing the first and second electrodes.
- Claim 47 (new) The method of Claim 46 wherein the step of electrically comparing includes comparing a quantity selected from the group consisting of conductance, dielectric value, impedance, inductance, current, resistance and capacitance.
- Claim 48 (new) The method of Claim 46 wherein the step of securing a container in the clamp includes the step of closing the clamp with a ram.
- Claim 49 (new) A method for evaluating the integrity of a seal on a liquid-filled container comprising:
- securing a liquid-filled container in a clamp such that a portion of that container extends into a liquid-filled tank;
 - forming an aperture in the secured container with a device that penetrates a wall of the container and providing that at least a portion of the device defines a first electrode;
 - providing a second electrode in the liquid-filled tank; and,
 - electrically comparing the first and second electrodes.

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Claim 50 (new) A method for evaluating the integrity of a seal on a liquid-filled container

comprising:

immersing at least a closure portion of the container in the liquid of a liquid-filled tank;

forming an aperture in a wall of the container;

providing a first electrode in the aperture formed in the container and providing a second electrode in the liquid-filled tank; and,

electrically comparing the first and second electrodes.
